Home.

Whether in the Arctic Circle
Or on India's coral strands,
Where the winds are perfume laden
And warm waves caress the sands,
Whether eastward, whether westward,
When the daylight fades to gloom,
Where a baby runs to meet you,
And to kiss you, that is home.

Where a baby runs to meet you—
That is all there is in life;
All there is at all worth winning,
Worth the slaving and the strife;
Two wee dimpled arms stretched to you,
Two expectant eyes that wait;
It is home for you wherever
There's a baby at the gate.

It is home—sweet home—forever,
Where the lilts of laughter run
Of a tousle-headed baby,
Sitting playing in the sun;
It is home where every night time
As the evening shadows creep
A wee nightrobed figure whispers:
"Now I lay me down to sleep."

—Houston Post.

TUNNEL NUMBER SIX

By EUGENE C. DERBY

Extending for thousands of feet beneath the earth's surface, joined by a vast labyrinth of tunnels and leads, the great iron mines of Maitland, New South Wales, still yield their riches to the hardy toilers with sledge and bar, just as they have done for scores of years already past and probably will continue to do for centuries to come.

Yet deep down in that mammoth excavation there is a vein of the richest magnetic iron ore, where the miners never strike a blow and where visitors are rarely shown. This remarkable lead is locally designed as The Haunted Vein—why and with what appropriateness may be judged from the following bit of history, which has never before appeared in print.

* * * * *

Early in the spring of 1893, a miner who was toiling alone at the farthest extremity of this big vein suddenly startled by hearing the cry of a human voice, coming, apparently, from beyond the very wall which formed the end of the lead. The man uttered an answering cry and, with his heavy sledge poised in air, listened for a repetition of the thrilling sound.

"Help! Help!"

"God above us!" gasped the startled man, "there's some one entombed here," and, turning, he sprang away to give the alarm at the main shaft.

The boss foreman, with a gang in charge, happened to be descending in a big cage just as Miner Chessman appeared, and the excited man called them to stop.

"There's somebody buried alive at the end of the six-foot lead!" he panted; "come and help me rescue him," and before his startled superior could question him, Chessman turned and darted back.

The foreman rushed in pursuit with six strong men, eager for the rescue.

"He is there; right beyond the big column!" breathlessly declared the miner, as he seized his sledge once again, preparatory to beginning operations. But at this point the puzzled foreman stepped forward and laid his hand firmly upon Chessman's arm.

"What do you mean?" he slowly articulated. The big miner turned a wild, startled look upon his interrogator.

"Great God, man!" he gasped, and his breath sounded like the hiss of escaping steam, "you heard it—the cry for help?"

The foreman slowly shook his head. "No, I did not hear a cry, and furthermore, Chessman, the very suggestion is absurd. There is absolutely nothing there save a vein of solid iron ore, which extends for many feet beneath the ocean."

"But I tell you I heard a cry!" expostulated the miner. "Perhaps only a few inches separate us from some other lead."

His manner proclaimed the sincerity of his words, but Foreman Gouchy dubiously shook his head.

"I do not propose to argue the question with you," he answered. "You may have thought you heard a cry, but I assure you no living thing exists beyond that wall of ore, for there is no tunnel, lead, or shaft in that direction, as the sea is but a short distance above and beyond you."

A look of reproach filled big Tom Chessman's eyes, plainly showing how keenly he felt the insinuation of his superior. He turned without a word and had raised his big sledge hammer to resume his labor upon the rocky wall when the signal for "knocking off" came, and, without so much as looking at any member of the party, Tom dropped his "mash" and started down the level toward the main shaft. His car, nearly filled with sparkling fragments of ore, stood upon the track which led to the main level, and it waited only the touch of a hand level, while the echo of a human groan caused the air to tremble and vibrate for several seconds.

"Howly Mither," he gasped, "it's a ghost!" and he never stopped running until he had reached the toll-boy's shanty at the main shaft.

"Number Six is ha'nted!" he sputtered, and then, as the empty cage appeared, going up, Tim jumped on board, and has never since been seen in the vicinity of the big mine.

However, this sensational incident led to an investigation. The next morning two reliable men were stationed at the farthest extremity of the big lead, with instructions to ascertain, if possible, the occasion for all this alarm. For an entire day they waited, listening in vain for some sound which should furnish a clew to the mystery. But none came, until, just previous to the hour when the "day shift" was about to quit work, one of the watchers suddenly raised his hand with a warning gesture.

Both men listened, and each distinctly heard a clicking sound, as of some one beyond the barrier picking at the iron. Then came a faint moan of bitter distress, followed by the distinctly audible sounds of a human voice, calling in agonized appeal:

"Help! Help! God save me or I shall perish."

This cry was immediately followed by a sickening groan, as though the suffering victim had exhausted every energy in making this final call for aid. Then all became silent as the grave.

Immediately the two miners awoke to a realization of the fact that something must be done, and that, too, without delay.

"Go for help," cried one, as he seized his sledge, and, while that maddening echo still vibrated in his ears, he swung the ponderous hammer against the unyielding barrier.

Then, while his companion rushed for the outer shaft to spread the alarm, this sturdy miner toiled as he had never toiled before.

Then he looked at the fragments of glistening ore that were heaped about him as the result of his labors, and, with a glad cry, he sprang to his task just as a score of flickering lamps turned a corner of the lead one hundred feet away.

The rescue party was at hand!

Six months later four men might have been seen descending into the big iron mine of Maitland, led by the superintendent, and each bearing the section of some scientific instrument by which an investigation was to be made—for the mystery of the six-foot lead had not yet been solved.

The rescue party had worked incessantly for four days and nights, when it had been discovered that the long tunnel was approaching an end, underneath the waters of Illawarra coast, and though the ore found here was of a quality superior to that in any other portion of the mine, it became necessary to stop work, as the mine was in danger of being flooded and lost.

The call for help could be heard at frequent intervals, coming from the very direction in which it appeared least possible for a human being to exist. In sheer desperation they finally called upon an aged scientist of Sydney, hoping that he might be able to advance some explanation.

The old professor came—he heard the cry—he pondered long and departed. Nothing was gained by his visit.

Now there appeared with their assistants two celebrated professors, one English and one German, who had been dispatched by their respective universities to make exhaustive study of The Haunted Vein, the remarkable history of which had been reported to them. These grave men came fully determined to fathom the secret of the Maitland mine or to spend the remainder of their days there in investigation.

When first they listened to the voice they, like their predecessors, declared that it came from beyond the barrier of ore.

"There is surely a very slight vibration near the face of the wall," proclaimed the German professor, who, in anticipation of the cry, had carefully arranged a very sensitive diaphragm close to the point from which the call had appeared to come.

They likewise took numerous measurements to satisfy themselves that the superintendent had been correct in asserting their proximity to the sea; they listened to that oft-repeated cry, and at last concluded that the sounds came from an entirely different source than was supposed. In other words, they explained to the superintendent that there was evidently some person imprisoned in a distant portion of the mine, whose voice was taken up and transmitted in some mysterious manner through the vast system of tunnels and leads, to the point where it was finally echoed from the face of the wall; or that possibly some laborer or other person within the mine was victimizing them, by uttering at frequent intervals these

"Help! Help!"

cries, which were transmitted hence in like manner.

It was determined to test this theory upon the brakes to release it and send it down the incline. Whether it was by accident or design that Tom released the brake-lever as he passed the car will never be positively known, but just as Chessmon stepped in front of it the heavy load started, and the next moment the big man was stretched prone beneath the low-lying axle.

At once Mark Gouchy and his helpers sprang to Chessman's assistance. But brave Tom was taken out unconscious, with a terrible gash across his temple, and for three days lay raging in wildest delirium.

"Help! Help!" he cried incessantly. And then: "I can hear the cry, Gouchy. A man is entombed beyond that wall."

Foreman Gouchy remained obdurate, however, and the six-foot lead was assigned to another miner.

Tim O'Connor had been working assiduously for several hours at the extremity of the vein, and had paused for a drink of water from a tin can near at hand, when he suddenly started, with the can half raised to his lips, and his eyes became riveted upon the black and glistening face of the ore wall. The Irishman's heart fairly missed a couple of beats, and a chill like ice crept up his spine; then, with a cry of alarm, he dropped the tin and dashed at breakneck speed down the with extreme care, and the officials caused every man to be withdrawn from the great excavation until the learned professors should have time to try still another experiment in support of this idea. A series of elaborate calculations followed. Every theory known to modern science for the measurement of repeated sound was advanced. And yet without success!

That call came once again, clear and distinct as before, at the face of the wall where it had ever been heard, but at no other point was it distinguished by either of the scientists.

In vain they arranged scientific instruments; they listened to the voice, they pondered over theories of heat, electric forces and transmitted sound. After a fortnight of tireless application they realized that they must soon acknowledge to an expectant world the chagrin of their own defeat. This was indeed a mystery! But the Englishman was determined never to yield so long as there was a possibility of success. He arranged a very sensitive phonographic apparatus near the face of the wall, so as to catch the faintest sounds, and with extreme patience he waited for the cry. It came at last:

"Help! Help!"

The scientist threw his electrical apparatus into action and bent forward to listen to the faintly articulated words. He was standing thus, his companions near at hand, when he was observed to throw up his arm as if to enjoin silence, and then his face became flushed with excitement as he heard the cry:

"Thank God, you have come at last!"

Then there followed a confused murmur of voices, while a gleam of light flashed from the English professor's eye.

He had discovered the key to the mystery.

"This magnetic iron ore is but a natural telephone!" cried Professor Blake, his face beaming with satisfaction. "We have been listening the the cry of some prisoner who was doubtless confined where the natural conditions served as a perfect transmitter of sound. The vein of iron ore has been the conductor, and we have listened to a message that doubtless has passed through many miles of magnetite—perhaps, indeed, the sounds have come from the distant mines of Siberia—"

The German professor started.

"Somewhere I have read," he exclaimed, brightening, "that to the north of the great Ural Mountains in Russia, in the bleak Obdorsk region, there exists a valuable mine of superior magnetite, where prisoners are often confined by the order of the czar. As these great veins of lodestone trend north and south, and as that section of Russia is almost due north of us, it is not at all improbable that your theory is the correct one."

Howbeit, the cries ceased from that hour. The sounds reproduced from Professor Blake's phonographic cylinder revealed another voice than that of the supposed prisoner. The dialect plainly identified the speaker as being either a Russian or a Pole.

To-day, three years later, the two great universities have just completed their investigations. After an exhaustive search it was learned that an American, suspected of being implicated in a political revolt, had been confined in a cell in the great magnetite mine near Serka, that he had constantly called for help during his period of imprisonment, and that at last he had been released through the efforts of a Polish nobleman named Zaluski, who came to his cell and rescued him upon the very day and hour that the English professor had made his remarkable discovery.

The superstition of the average miner, however, is proverbial. In spite of the scientists the voices which sometimes echo faintly through deserted Number Six preclude any intrusion by these sturdy toilers upon the solicitudes of The Haunted Vein.